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Progress report of the Secretary-General on Ethiopia and Eritrea

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 1320 (2000) of 15 September 2000. It provides an update on developments since my report of 30 August 2002 (S/2002/977) and describes the deployment and activities of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), whose mandate was extended until 15 March 2003 by Security Council resolution 1434 (2002) of 6 September 2002. The report includes an update on UNMEE activities related to the provision of assistance to the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, as mandated by the relevant Council resolutions, with a view to facilitating the work of the Commission in demarcating the border.

II. Status of the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas

2. During the period under review, the situation in the Temporary Security Zone remained generally calm. The armed forces of Ethiopia and Eritrea cooperated relatively well with UNMEE, and no significant military activities were observed on either side of the Zone. However, during September and October, a series of cross-border incidents occurred in Sector Centre, involving cattle-rustling, abductions and clashes over grazing land between residents in the border areas. On some occasions, the situation became very tense, culminating in an incident that occurred on 4 October in which Ethiopian militia and villagers threatened the safety and security of UNMEE peacekeepers. That incident in particular raised serious concern on the part of both my Special Representative and myself.

3. While cross-border harassment and cattle-rustling are essentially beyond the scope of the Mission's mandate, they could have a destabilizing effect and therefore have implications for the overall peace process. Consequently, my Special Representative engaged senior officials on both sides, encouraging them to find a solution to the problem of cross-border incidents. Through the active involvement of UNMEE and the cooperation of the parties, the situation has been relatively stabilized. UNMEE has intensified its patrols in the areas of concern and is in close contact with local administrators so as to prevent future incidents.

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Freedom of movement of the Mission

4. UNMEE personnel continue to be subjected to immigration formalities by the Ethiopian authorities at the airport in Addis Ababa. Such procedures cause delays and constitute a violation of the status-of-forces agreement. On the Eritrean side, UNMEE personnel still experience some restrictions on their freedom of movement in the area adjacent to the Temporary Security Zone, primarily in Sector Centre.

5. Regrettably, there has still been no progress regarding the establishment of a direct high-altitude flight route for UNMEE aircraft between Asmara and Addis Ababa. In the absence of an agreed direct route, UNMEE has continued to fly between the two capitals via Djibouti, with serious operational and security implications for the Mission. The flight deviations have also resulted in considerable additional expense, totalling $2,002,000 as at 31 December 2002. Given the advanced stage of the peace process, I once again appeal to the parties to resolve this issue in a spirit of compromise.

Military Coordination Commission

6. After a seven-month interlude, the fourteenth meeting of the Military Coordination Commission was held on 11 December, in Nairobi. The meeting was opened by my Special Representative, who introduced the new Force Commander, Major General Robert Gordon. My Special Representative also underscored the importance of the new phase of the peace process, which should centre on the demarcation of the border, and called on the Military Coordination Commission to take up its supporting responsibility in that regard. The Commission reviewed the military situation in the Mission area, as well as the texts of the recent Security Council resolutions. It also discussed issues of coordination related to preventing and responding to potentially disruptive incidents in the border areas and inside the Temporary Security Zone. The Commission furthermore began discussing the modalities for the process of demining in support of demarcation.

Deployment of the Mission

7. During the period under review, there have been no major changes in the deployment of UNMEE. However, I have been informed by the Government of Italy that, owing to other requirements, the Italian aviation unit serving in UNMEE will be withdrawn effective 8 December this year. As at 10 December, the total strength of the military component of UNMEE stood at 4,140 personnel, comprising 3,805 troops, 128 headquarters staff officers and 207 military observers (see annex II).

8. On 31 October, Major General Robert Gordon (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) assumed his functions as the new Force Commander of UNMEE. In this connection, I would like to express my appreciation to Major-General Patrick C. Cammaert, who served as UNMEE Force Commander with distinction throughout his two-year tour of duty.

III. Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission

9. In preparation for the demarcation process, the Boundary Commission met with the parties in London on 6 and 7 November to discuss issues related to demarcation, including the transfer of territorial control. My Special Representative attended as an observer. At the meeting, the Commission promulgated a time frame for demarcation activities spanning the period from 31 December 2002 to 31 August 2003, with actual demarcation commencing in May 2003. The Commission also issued determinations regarding Ethiopian settlements across the delimitation line (S/2002/1245). I renew my appeal to the parties to avoid any activities in the border area that could be perceived as destabilizing. Additional information on the recent work of the Commission as well as its plans for demarcation, provided by its President, is contained in annex I.

10. In view of the progress made in preparation for demarcation, as well as the decision of the Security Council in its resolution 1434 (2002) to review any implications for UNMEE with regard to the process of territorial transfers during demarcation, my Special Representative has initiated discussions with the parties in the context of article 4.16 of the Algiers Peace Agreement of 12 December 2000. The Council will recall that in that article, the parties requested the United Nations to facilitate resolution of problems which may arise due to the transfer of territorial control, including the consequences for individuals residing in previously disputed territory.

11. Following the adjustment of the UNMEE mandate under resolution 1430 (2002) of 14 August, the Mission has been assisting the Boundary Commission in the implementation of its delimitation decision (S/2002/423, annex). While the Boundary Commission is working to finalize the maps on which demarcation will be based, the UNMEE Mine-Action Coordination Centre has been refining plans for mine clearance in key border areas, including potential access routes to possible boundary pillar sites. The Mission has also been providing office accommodation, communications equipment and other logistical support for the Boundary Commission's field offices in Addis Ababa, Adigrat and Asmara.

12. As stated in my previous report, UNMEE will provide demining services to support demarcation within its existing authorized strength, while costs related to civilian demining contractors and the provision of administrative and logistical support to the field offices of the Boundary Commission will be funded from the United Nations Trust Fund for the Delimitation and Demarcation of the Border. Voluntary contributions and pledges to the Trust Fund currently total some $8.4 million. Anticipated expenditures incurred as at 31 December 2002 will be about $4.4 million.

13. I would like to renew my appreciation to those Member States which have responded generously to my appeal for contributions to the Fund. However, according to the report of the President of the Boundary Commission, the cost required to complete the demarcation for the next year is estimated to be about $7.6 million, which will cause a shortfall of about $4.6 million. In this respect, I would like to repeat my appeal for further contributions so that the demarcation can be successfully completed as planned by the Commission without any suspension due to lack of funding.

IV. Mine action

14. Landmines and unexploded ordnance remain a major threat to the population of the two countries, to United Nations staff and to humanitarian personnel operating on the ground. From September to early November 2002, six civilians were injured and two killed in four incidents involving mines and unexploded ordnance in the Temporary Security Zone and its adjacent areas.

15. Following the establishment of the Eritrean Demining Agency, mentioned in my previous report, Eritrea assumed all responsibility for humanitarian demining in the country on 31 August. Following instructions by the Government, three international civil society organizations involved in mine-action activities have ceased their operations on the ground and have left the country. (One such organization and one commercial company have been permitted to continue operations.) All national mine-action assets have also temporarily ceased operations. These events have led to the loss of humanitarian mine-action capacity in the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas, impeding preparations on the ground for the return of internally displaced persons to their homes in the Zone. Since no mine-risk education activities are taking place in the Zone, the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre is implementing an emergency mine-risk education operation to fill the gap.

16. In view of the new circumstances, the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre has developed a revised work plan, restructuring the current mine action elements within the Centre and UNMEE as a whole. The plan focuses on providing support to the UNMEE force and military observers in the Temporary Security Zone, as mandated by the Security Council, while maintaining the capacity to continue to provide support to the coordination of humanitarian mine-action activities in the Zone. Increasingly, the focus of UNMEE will be on mine-action activities associated with the demarcation of the border. Meanwhile, good progress continued to be made in clearing all routes in the Temporary Security Zone of mines and unexploded ordnance. On average, 20 kilometres are surveyed and 10 kilometres are cleared every day.

V. Humanitarian developments

17. The drought in Ethiopia and Eritrea has taken a serious turn, and its effects on the population are of utmost concern to me and to the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as to the humanitarian community. In October, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator visited the Horn of Africa to assess the effects of the drought and the overall humanitarian situation. Upon his return, he shared with me his conclusion that the drought in both countries was dire and that urgent steps needed to be taken to avert an outright famine.

18. Drought and erratic rainfall have already led to massive crop failure and livestock losses in both countries. Several regions, traditionally self-sufficient in terms of food, have experienced almost complete devastation of cereal production in 2002. Similarly, the lack of water has destroyed herds that were just recovering from the last drought, in 1999 and 2000.

19. In Eritrea, the Government has reported that 1.4 million people have been directly affected by the drought, in addition to the thousands who are still struggling to recover from the border conflict. Among these, internally displaced persons, refugees, expellees, vulnerable urban-dwellers, those affected by HIV/AIDS and soldiers awaiting demobilization are the more notable groups. The number of people currently considered to be vulnerable has increased from 1.36 million in 2001/02 to an estimated 2.3 million in 2002/03. Whereas the immediate cause of the crisis in Eritrea is the failure of seasonal rains, basic vulnerability and underlying structural causes should be considered. There is a general consensus on the need to simultaneously support emergency relief programmes and longer-term development efforts in order to break the cycle of starvation due to drought.

20. In Ethiopia, up to 14 million drought-affected persons could be in need of assistance, mainly food aid, in a worst-case scenario for 2003. It is estimated that over 300,000 metric tons will be required in the first quarter of 2003. Currently, more than 6 million people are in need of food aid, according to Government and international assessments. Despite contributions from major donors this fall, the national food reserve stands at 51 per cent of requirements. The drought has affected mainly the eastern half of Ethiopia, as well as certain surplus agricultural areas, unlike in previous years. In regional states bordering Eritrea, such as Tigray and Afar, which are among the hardest hit, competition over resources could escalate local tensions.

21. As regards the fight against the HIV/AIDS scourge, UNMEE has continued its efforts within the mission area and has been organizing joint "training of trainers" courses in both countries. These courses in HIV/AIDS peer leadership remain the most effective way of reaching a large number of people within a short period of time. The parties are cooperating very well in this important area.

22. The programme of quick-impact projects continued during the period under review, with activities undertaken in the areas of water, sanitation, reconstruction, education and health. From the roughly $900,000 available to UNMEE for these projects since the Mission's inception, 32 have been completed, 28 are nearing completion and 10 are still being implemented. Since my previous report, more than 70 new proposals have been received from various implementing partners, which now await funding. While I am grateful for the contributions and pledges made by various governments, rehabilitation needs in the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas remain great, and additional funding is required in order for these essential projects to continue.

VI. Human rights

23. The repatriation of civilians by both Ethiopia and Eritrea continued, under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Eritrea repatriated 346 persons of Ethiopian origin during the reporting period, bringing the total number of persons repatriated in 2002 to 1,048. Ethiopia has repatriated 528 persons of Eritrean origin during the course of 2002. According to information collected by UNMEE, persons of both nationalities continued to complain of economic hardship in the other country, particularly their inability to find work as a result of discrimination on the basis of nationality. Meanwhile, UNMEE continued to

investigate reports of cross-border abductions of civilians, some of which appeared to have been the result of disputes over local grazing lands.

24. I am very pleased to report that, in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and the Algiers Peace Agreement, Ethiopia has now released the last Eritrean detainees who had been registered and regularly visited by ICRC. Among those, 1,130 prisoners of war and 95 civilian internees returned to Eritrea on 29 November under the auspices of ICRC. As members of the Council will recall, Eritrea in August of this year released the last 279 prisoners of war who had been registered by ICRC. Since the beginning of the conflict in 1998, no fewer than 1,067 Ethiopian prisoners of war, 5,055 Ethiopian civilian internees, 2,067 Eritrean prisoners of war and 1,086 Eritrean civilian internees have been repatriated under the auspices of ICRC. The end of the ordeal for all these individuals concludes an important chapter in the peace process, and will hopefully also contribute to the normalization of relations between the two countries.

VII. Public information

25. The UNMEE Public Information Office has continued to report on developments in the peace process, publicizing and explaining the Mission's mandate, and to cover high-profile events such as the joint celebration of the International Day of Peace in both countries by UNMEE and the United Nations country teams. On United Nations Day, as a demonstration of the coordinated United Nations presence in the mission area and the linkage between peace and development, my Special Representative and the resident coordinator in Ethiopia gave a joint interview on Ethiopian television, which received wide regional coverage. The Office also maintained its series of weekly press briefings via videoconference linking the two capitals. Outreach centres were opened in Mekelle, Ethiopia, and Barentu, Eritrea, on 9 and 12 December respectively. The Television Unit has initiated a series of video clips for local cinemas.

26. Radio UNMEE continues its biweekly short-wave broadcasts, as well as its weekly broadcasts on Radio Eritrea. There has been no further progress in obtaining access to the airwaves of Ethiopia free of charge. The Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority has, however, expressed its willingness to air UNMEE programmes at a cost of approximately $54,419 per year. The Minister of Information has also recently expressed willingness to explore this issue further in the light of the Broadcasting Authority's plans to expand its programming.

VIII. Financial aspects

27. The General Assembly, by its resolution 56/250 B of 27 June 2002, appropriated the amount of $230,845,300 gross for the maintenance of UNMEE for the financial period from 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003. As at 31 October 2002, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNMEE amounted to $73,734,347. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $1,652,208,793.

IX. Observations

28. Despite occasional difficulties and delays, the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea has progressed steadily since the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities (S/2000/601, annex) was signed in June 2000. This progress was most recently exemplified by the release by Ethiopia of all remaining Eritrean prisoners of war registered by ICRC, which brought that chapter of the peace process to a conclusion. I am also encouraged by the fact that there have been no ceasefire violations since the establishment of the Temporary Security Zone. I hope that these achievements, which are a credit to the parties, will be carried forward. The peace process is now about to enter the crucial phase of border demarcation.

29. During this challenging phase, it will be vital that the parties continue to extend to UNMEE and the Boundary Commission their full cooperation. Inevitably, the demarcation of any border has legal, humanitarian and human rights implications; these will require immediate attention for the sake of the people who will be affected by the transfer of territorial control. In this connection, it is essential that the two parties engage in discussions with my Special Representative to address any issues that might arise with a view to reaching agreement on their resolution.

30. Despite repeated requests by the Security Council, my Special Representative and myself, the Government of Eritrea has still not signed the status-of-forces agreement with the United Nations. I appeal once again to the Eritrean leadership to conclude this important agreement without further delay. Meanwhile, in accordance with resolution 1320 (2000), the model status-of-forces agreement is in effect. It should be recalled that the Government of Ethiopia signed a status-of-forces agreement in March 2001.

31. The period ahead will also require, perhaps more than ever, that the two parties, as well as the Boundary Commission and UNMEE, continue to enjoy the full political and financial support of the international community. The Trust Fund for the Delimitation and Demarcation of the Border will be depleted quickly once demarcation begins, despite the significant contributions received so far. While the parties are expected to bear the burden of delimitation and demarcation expenditures equally, it is clear that without international assistance the process could face serious delays. I would therefore like to renew my appeal to the donor community to contribute to the Fund in order to facilitate the conclusion of the demarcation process in accordance with the Boundary Commission's schedule.

32. While the overall situation in the Temporary Security Zone and the adjacent areas has remained generally calm, the recent cross-border incidents have revealed a new dimension of the conflict between the two neighbouring countries, namely, the local competition for scarce resources in the drought-affected border areas. The efforts made by the parties to resolve these incidents through peaceful means are welcome, and I urge them to do their utmost to prevent a recurrence. As always, my Special Representative is prepared to assist the parties in this regard. In the same vein, UNMEE continues to stand ready to provide assistance for any measures that are aimed at building confidence and contributing to the normalization of relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

33. The looming drought in the Horn of Africa, and particularly in Eritrea and Ethiopia, is a source of deep concern to me and to the leaders of the two countries, as well as to the international community as a whole. Given the urgent need to

provide large quantities of food and other forms of assistance in order to avert a major emergency in 2003, I appeal to Member States to provide prompt and generous support for humanitarian operations in Eritrea and Ethiopia through the consolidated appeals process and other mechanisms, in order to avert further suffering and loss of life.

34. In conclusion, I wish to express my gratitude to my Special Representative, Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, and the military and civilian personnel of UNMEE for their tireless efforts to support the peace process. I am also grateful to the staff of the United Nations country teams and other humanitarian workers operating on the ground for their excellent cooperation with UNMEE, and especially for their assistance to the people of the two countries, whose recovery from conflict has been rendered even more difficult by the serious drought in the region. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Boundary Commission, which has been hard at work in its preparations for the demarcation of the border. The period ahead will pose major challenges, but I have no doubt that with the cooperation of the parties and the continued and invaluable support of the African Union and interested Member States, including troop-contributing countries, the peace process will reach a successful conclusion.

Annex I

Seventh report of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission

1. This is the seventh report of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, covering the period from 1 September to 30 November 2002.

2. During this period the Commission, the Special Consultant, the Office of the Secretary and the field offices in Eritrea and Ethiopia ("the area") have been engaged in preparing the 1:25,000 scale maps in order to be in a position to proceed with the determination of the location of the boundary markers and to begin the work of erecting them. With the cooperation of the parties, significant progress has been made, and all the field work necessary for the production of these maps has been completed.

3. At the beginning of the period, the Special Consultant prepared a statement of operations already performed and a statement and schedule of operations to be performed, upon which the parties were given the opportunity to comment. Since September, the Special Consultant has provided the parties with monthly progress reports on the schedule of operations.

4. As required by the demarcation directions promulgated on 8 July 2002, the parties have designated their liaison representatives and field liaison officers. The Special Consultant, together with the Chief Surveyor and the Deputy Secretary, started regular liaison meetings with the parties' liaison representatives in each capital. Regular contact is maintained between the field office staff and the liaison representatives and field liaison officers for the purposes of providing the parties with information about planned operations and of making necessary arrangements in connection therewith. The field liaison officers of both parties accompanied the field office staff as observers in their field work.

5. The Secretary and his deputy visited the area between 26 October and 2 November 2002. In preparation for a review of the orthophoto maps, they conducted a familiarization flight along the boundary, including a stopover at Adigrat, to inspect the new field office located there.

6. The Special Consultant, Secretary and Chief Surveyor held meetings in Addis Ababa on 28 October and in Asmara on 31 October with representatives of each party to discuss the schedule of operations and other technical matters. Minutes of each meeting were provided to both parties and to the Commission.

7. On 6 and 7 November, the Commission met in London with representatives of the parties to discuss the timeline for, and certain technical details of, the demarcation. The Secretary, Registrar and Special Consultant also attended, as did representatives of the African Union, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as observers.

8. In response to certain questions that had arisen concerning the scope of the Commission's jurisdiction and powers and compliance with the Commission's order of 17 July 2002, the Commission issued, on 7 November, a document entitled "Determinations", which was transmitted to the United Nations and the African Union for publication (see S/2002/1245).

9. Following consultation with the parties in accordance with article 30 of the Commission's Rules of Procedure, the Commission issued, on 13 November, an amendment to the demarcation directions of 8 July, replacing paragraph 8D with new text requiring each party to ensure, within the area under its control, the safety of all field office staff and other demarcation personnel, and to inform the local government officers and population in advance of the activities of such persons.

10. On 25 November, the Secretary transmitted to the parties the 1:25,000 scale orthophoto maps of the Western Sector. The remaining maps are expected to be provided to the parties before the end of the year, and the parties will have an opportunity to make technical comments thereon no later than 17 January 2003. Taking such comments into consideration, the Commission plans to conduct a detailed field assessment of the boundary pillar locations and to start the actual placement of the boundary pillars in mid-May. Pillar emplacement and as-built survey work is scheduled to be completed in 2003 on a sector-by-sector basis, as follows: Western Sector (end of June), Central Sector (end of July) and Eastern Sector (end of August). Within approximately one month after the completion of each sector, the Commission will issue to the parties the final map of that sector, together with a copy of the relevant pages of the register recording the final location of each pillar. Receipt of final documentation from the survey contractor and the preparation of a small-scale index map is scheduled for completion by mid-October 2003.

11. UNMEE continues to provide logistical and transport services, including accommodation for the demarcation contractors. Preparatory work has already been undertaken with respect to the demining of pillar sites. In this connection, and in view of Security Council resolutions, there is frequent consultation between the field office staff and UNMEE personnel, as well as between the President of the Commission and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The Commission expresses its continued appreciation for the help that it receives from UNMEE.

12. The Secretary is presently preparing a budget for demarcation operations in the first half of 2003. Even now, it appears that additional contributions to the Trust Fund need to be made very soon if interruption of these operations is to be avoided. This is because the estimated cost of finishing the demarcation in 2003 is approximately $7.6 million, whereas the current balance of the Trust Fund is only $3 million, and this will be exhausted early in 2003. An additional $4.6 million is urgently needed during the first quarter of next year to ensure the progress of the demarcation. The Commission therefore requests the Secretary-General to draw the attention of all United Nations Member States to the pressing need for further contributions as soon as possible.

(*Signed*) Sir Elihu **Lauterpacht**
President of the Commission
10 December 2002

Annex II

United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea: contributions as at 10 December 2002

Country	*Military observers*	*Staff*	*Troops*	*Total*	*National support elements*
Algeria	8			8	
Australia		2		2	
Austria	2			2	
Bangladesh	7	6	159	172	
Benin	0	3		3	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	9			9	
Bulgaria	5	2		7	
Canada	6			6	
China	5			5	
Croatia	5			5	
Czech Republic	2			2	
Denmark	4			4	
Finland	7	2		9	
France		2		2	
Gambia	4	2		6	
Ghana	10	7		17	
Greece	3			3	
India	2	21	1 521	1 544	
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	2			2	
Ireland		12	203	215	7
Italy	3	6	109	118	
Jordan	6	16	943	965	
Kenya	11	13	640	664	
Malaysia	6	5		11	
Namibia	3	2		5	
Nepal	4			4	
Netherlands	1			1	
Nigeria	6	4		10	
Norway	5			5	
Paraguay	2			2	
Peru	2			2	
Poland	6			6	
Romania	8			8	
Russian Federation	6			6	
Singapore	2			2	

Country	*Military observers*	*Staff*	*Troops*	*Total*	*National support elements*
Slovakia		3	202	205	5
South Africa	5	2		7	
Spain	3	2		5	
Sweden	6			6	
Switzerland	4			4	
Tunisia	2	3		5	
Ukraine	6			6	
United Kingdom	1	2			
United Republic of Tanzania	8	3		11	
United States of America	6	1		7	
Uruguay	4			4	
Zambia	10	4		14	
Total	**207**	**128**	**3 805**	**4 140**	**12**